

Patrol Squadron Four Heads "Down Under"

On February 19th, two P-3C Orion's from Patrol Squadron (VP) Four left Kadena Air Base for Royal Australian Air Force Base Pearce in Australia for TAMEX, a joint exercise with the Royal Australian Air Force and a Collins class submarine from the Royal Australian Navy. The exercise was designed to improve the maritime interoperability between the United States and Australian forces. Personnel on the detachment included VP-4's Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Steve Newlund, detachment Officer in Charge Lt. Cmdr. Dennis Lloyd, Combat Air Crew One lead by Mission Commander Lt. Devin Holmes, and Combat Air Crew Seven lead by Mission Commander Lt. Matt Welch.

The exercise consisted of four flights for each crew off the western coast of Australia, providing an opportunity to practice tactical swaps with the RAAF in addition to diesel submarine tactics training. The first two flights consisted of the crews requesting the submarine to perform certain maneuvers with communication breaks as necessary to discuss the training so far. This allowed the crews to focus their training on certain aspects of antisubmarine warfare (ASW), such as acoustic and non-acoustic search tactics, as well as passive and active acoustic tracking. By the fourth flight, the aircrews were required to track the submarine without any knowledge of its plan of action.

The exercise also provided the unique opportunity for Australian flight students to join VP-4 on its missions. The students were exposed to the basics of each crew station and tactics, as well as the on station ASW capabilities provided by the aircraft. They were also on hand to watch the crews conduct simulated torpedo attacks on the submarine. Both crews successfully tracked the submarine for more than 20 hours, flying 8 missions over the course of four days.

During their off hours, the crews were afforded the opportunity to explore Perth and its surrounding area. Popular locations included Caversham Wildlife Park, where visitors can feed and pet various wildlife native to Australia such as kangaroos and koala bears as well as a chocolate factory, microbreweries, and extensive shopping.

Overall, the exercise provided a unique and once in a lifetime opportunity for the crews as well as the maintenance personnel involved in the exercise. Cheers!